

Jacket Copy

Winner of the *Prairie Schooner* Book Prize in Fiction

University of Nebraska Press

October 2004

Last Call

By K. L. Cook

“The stories in *Last Call* are about fractured families, lovers and losers (often one and the same), and coming of age the hard way. Cook writes with ease and naturalness and a wonderful, sorrowful knowledge of human foibles.”

—National Book Award finalist Jean Thompson, author of *Who Do You Love*

“The stories in *Last Call* are so entertaining it seems almost unfair that they also resonate powerfully long after you’ve put down the book. K. L. Cook has whopping gifts, and this is a splendid book.”

—Award-winning novelist Robert Boswell, author of *Century’s Son*

“*Last Call* is a terrific first book. K. L. Cook starts with the pungent inventory of country-western songs but lights it all, even his honky-tonks, fried food, downed trees, sick dogs and rain, with a new understanding of men and women. These are rich stories by an exciting new voice.”

—Award-winning short-story writer Ron Carlson, author of *A Kind of Flying*

K. L. Cook’s debut collection of linked stories spans three generations in the life of one West Texas family. Events both tender and tragic lead to a strange and lovely vision of a world stitched together in tenuous ways as the characters struggle to make sense of their lives amid the shifting boundaries of marriage, family, class and culture.

A series of unusual incidents—a daughter’s elopement, a sobering holiday trip, a vicious attack by the family dog, a lightning strike—provokes a mother of five to abandon her children. An oil rigger, inspired by sun-induced hallucinations, rescues his estranged wife, who doesn’t appreciate his chivalry. In the wake of his father’s and brother’s deaths, a teenage boy finds a precarious solace working with his mother at a country-western bar. A cosmetics salesman schemes to buy Costa Rica and flirts dangerously with mobsters in Las Vegas. A woman, fleeing her fourth marriage, arrives at a complicated understanding of love and responsibility.

Railroad worker and conman, grieving son and battered wife—these characters explore the limits of family fragility and resilience. Their stories—suggesting unlikely connections between comedy and pathos, cruelty and generosity—promise a hard-won dignity and hope.

K. L. Cook’s award-winning stories have appeared in numerous literary journals

and magazines, including *American Short Fiction*, *Threepenny Review*, *Shenandoah*, and *Harvard Review*. Cook teaches creative writing and literature at Prescott College in Arizona.